

## **EXHIBIT D**

## LONG ISLAND / SUFFOLK

# Islip split on Community Development Agency appointments

At least one former agency member said she was concerned that the new makeup of the board is not representative of the town's population.



Renee Ortiz, who was not reappointed to the Islip Community Development Agency, said the new makeup of the board lacks diversity. Photo Credit: SCCC / Victoria Pendzick

**By Rachelle Blidner**

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A surprise move to replace members of an Islip Town agency that oversees affordable housing and public service programs has split the town board and raised concerns about representation of the town's population.

The town board voted 3-2 in an April 24 meeting to appoint three new members to the Community Development Agency's voluntary board of directors in a last-minute resolution that was not on the agenda.

Councilwoman Trish Bergin Weichbrodt called for a vote before all board members had seen the resumes of the appointees, a move Supervisor Angie Carpenter called a "foolish" and counterproductive "upheaval."

The vote split the all-Republican board, with the resolution supported by Councilwoman Mary Kate Mullen and Councilman Jim O'Connor and opposed by Councilman John Cochrane.

The CDA is an independent agency that administers federal housing funds, provides a lottery for first-time home buyers and eliminates blighted conditions in the town. It is overseen by a five-member, unpaid board. The agency's bylaws call for members to be appointed to five-year terms without representing specific districts.

Board members Renee Ortiz, 45, of Central Islip, Ramon Colon, 46, of Bay Shore and Steve Raccuglia, 48, of Ronkonkoma, were replaced with Timothy Morris, 35, of Bayport, Jarett Gandolfo, 27, of West Islip and Ryan T. Kelly, 31, of Sayville. The changes took effect immediately.

Ortiz, Colon and Raccuglia were still attending meetings and making decisions on the board, even though their terms had expired. They were not told of the vote beforehand.

Morris was appointed for five years, Gandolfo for nine months and Kelly for a 20-month term.

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Ortiz, who ran unsuccessfully for Islip town board in 2011, said she is concerned that the town board's "power play" appoints members from the south side of town while the majority of the agency's funding goes to projects in communities on the north side, such as Brentwood and Central Islip. She said the CDA board now appears to have just one person of color and one woman on it.

"We have no one that represents us in the town," said Ortiz, the executive director for the Center for Social Justice and Human Understanding at Suffolk County Community College. "We just are always neglected here."

All members of the town board, who are elected at-large, are white in a town where about 25 percent of the population is Hispanic or African-American.

CDA chairwoman Debra Cavanagh, who is also the president of the Central Islip Coalition of Good Neighbors, said the vote was "a shock to everyone." Because she has not met the new appointees, she said she could not speak for their backgrounds, but that the previous board members "see a lot because of where we live and what we experience."

The CDA is projected this year to spend about \$5.6 million, including an estimated \$2.7 million in federal housing funding, acting executive director Sal Matera said.

Projects have included helping to develop the College Woods area in Central Islip and financing new homes in a previously blighted area in Brentwood.

Bergin Weichbrodt and O'Connor declined to comment. Mullen, Morris, Gandolfo and Kelly did not respond to requests for comment.

"To introduce a last-minute resolution, removing competent people without affording all members of the Town Board an opportunity to review the new appointees' qualifications and backgrounds is something I cannot support, and surely is a disservice to those we've been elected to represent," Carpenter said in a statement.

Carpenter and Ortiz said the change comes as the agency looks for a new executive director, a position that is appointed by the CDA board. The previous director, Alison Karppi, was paid about \$103,000 a year and left in June 2017 to become the commissioner of housing and human services in Brookhaven Town.

Matera said he is serving simultaneously as executive director and his previous role of chief financial officer, which he plans to step back into after a new executive director is found.

More than 100 people have applied for the position, and the CDA is expected to make its final selection at Thursday's meeting, town spokeswoman Caroline Smith said.



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